

NOTES TO READ DURING PRESENTATION

Slide 2: Savonarola Girolamo Savonarola, (born September 21, 1452, Ferrara, duchy of Ferrara [Italy]—died May 23, 1498, Florence), Italian Christian preacher, reformer, and martyr, renowned for his clash with tyrannical rulers and corrupt clergy. After the overthrow of the Medici in 1494, Savonarola was the sole leader of Florence, setting up a democratic republic. His chief enemies were the duke of Milan and Pope Alexander VI, who issued numerous restraints against him, all of which were ignored.

Slide 4: Confessor A priest qualified to hear the confessions of the faithful and grant sacramental absolution. A confessor is also empowered to grant certain dispensations and absolve from censures, according to the provisions of ecclesiastical law.

Notable mentions: Among the shop's suppliers in the 1510s was Battista Landucci, whose father Luca was a well-known pharmacist, chronicler and avid supporter of Savonarola welfare projects. Moreover, one of the first women to train as an apothecary at S. Caterina – a process that will be described later – was Sister Bartolomea Bettini, a young nun in her twenties whose father Piero was deeply involved in the cause; five of her brothers became friars at S. Marco. These Savonarola connections continued to shape the development of the pharmacy throughout the sixteenth century.

Slide 5:

- Purgatives □ Laxatives
- Medicinal waters □ natural mineral waters with proven therapeutical effects
- Electuaries □ Medicinal preparations (usually made with sugar, syrup, or honey)
- Unguents □ Ointment

All traditionally stocked pharmacy shelves during the Renaissance.

Slide 8: Cult of Remembrance: Renaissance cult of remembrance. In 1363 the Black Death devastated central Italy for the second time, causing a detectable shift in notions of afterlife and patterns of charitable giving. Throughout Tuscany and Umbria, patricians and peasants alike abandoned the practice of dividing their bequests into small sums, combining them instead into last gifts to enhance their "fame and glory". But this new cult of remembrance, Cohn argues, does not support Burckhardt's thesis of Renaissance "individualism". Instead, the new piety grew in tandem with reverence for ancestors and a strong sense of family identity founded on the importance of male blood lines. But rather than retreat into the religious pessimism of earlier times, survivors of the plague would develop into a new generation of art patrons, albeit one with a taste for distinctively cruder and more regimented forms of religious art. From the supposed center of Renaissance culture - Florence - to the citadel of Franciscan devotion - Assisi - the widespread change of sentiment created a new demand for monumental burials, testamentary commissions for art, and other efforts to exert control over the living from beyond the grave.

Silk: Using earnings from more lucrative silk work to expand their business in the 1520s, the S. Caterina nuns quickly transformed the pharmacy into a profitable venture that helped support everyday living expenses, architectural expansion, and convent furnishings. By 1525, only a decade after its foundation, the pharmacy was already contributing six per cent of earned income to a mixed convent economy dominated at this early stage by silk work, which accounted for roughly half of earned income, and dowry payments, which comprised the bulk of convent revenues as the community recruited over a hundred new members by 1520.

Gold Thread: Although spinning gold thread remained more profitable, it was saddled with moral objections, whereas making medicines fulfilled a core religious objective. The lack of civic tax reports or visitation records for the early Cinquecento makes it impossible to gauge the full economic contribution of pharmacy production. Regardless, even modest income from this newly commercialized activity helped S. Caterina cover cash shortfalls, buy property, and diversify its economic portfolio.

📄 **Slide 9: Problematic Friars** 📄 To compensate the friars for both masses and medicinal supplies, the S. Caterina nuns sometimes rendered the equivalent value in pharmaceutical items they had manufactured in-house. Some of these items were used by the friars themselves; other wares such as soaps and syrups were subsequently retailed through the vaunted S. Marco pharmacy. Thus, the friars acted concurrently as suppliers, consumers and vendors of nuns' merchandise.²⁵ These interlocking economic and supervisory roles solidified S. Marco's control over S. Caterina's productive activities and made the nuns' pharmacy vulnerable to local political struggles, first as the Savonarolan movement itself fractured, and later as the friars locked horns with Duke Cosimo. This arrangement was unique among Florentine convent pharmacies; shops affiliated with other orders or congregations were not supplied or supervised in comparable ways. Moreover, older, propertied convents not associated with S. Marco supplemented outside purchases of medicinals with home-grown plants to a greater extent. The Annalena nuns, for instance, cultivated simples in their extensive gardens and harvested saffron on their farm-holdings, while the nuns of L Murate, whose apothecary shop was in high gear by the mid-sixteenth century, relied on their celebrated gardens and internal orchards for both fruits and medicinal herbs.

Available sources: Disparities in available sources – convent account books, house chronicles and necrologies, guild petitions – make some of these shops far better documented than others. These cadres of nun apothecaries joined the ranks of Italian wives and widows who either managed their husbands' apothecary shops or worked as pharmacists themselves.